

“Today we are treated like human beings!” Methodological strategies of Action Research with family farmers’ practitioners of the slash-and-burn system in Southern Brazil

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We present and discuss the action-research methodological strategies used with farmers of Biguaçu, on the coast of Santa Catarina State, southern Brazil, over eight years. These strategies have enabled access to the formal market of farmers who produce in the slash-and-burn system the added value to products from this system and, above all, the collective organisation and raising their self-esteem. Cutting and burning agriculture, locally known as "roça de toco", consists of the felling and burning of a small piece of vegetation (glebe) for the implementation of annual crops for a few years. After that, the glebe is left fallow so that the forest and soil fertility regenerate, and another glebe is felled and cultivated. In Biguaçu, three main products are obtained in this system: charcoal, cassava and cassava flour. Although having recognised quality and being produced in an ecologically intelligent system, these products were marketed irregularly, with little financial return for farmers who were surrounded by large legal and environmental insecurity. Within the framework of different projects, different strategies were used to overcome this situation. We highlight the unprecedented combination, in working with farmers, of the thematic research of Paulo Freire with the Teaching Moments, used for the transposition of Freire's premises for the teaching of science. On that basis, the group took conscience of their problems and of the need to acquire new knowledge and new attitudes that would overcome them. To plan for overcoming the problems, the method ZOPP of participatory planning (Objectives-Oriented Project Planning) was used. The set of strategies used resulted in the development of packaging and collective marks and the constitution, in July